

P 011143Z OCT 09  
FM AMCONSUL JEDDAH  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1544  
INFO AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD PRIORITY  
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT PRIORITY  
IRAQ COLLECTIVE  
AMEMBASSY RIYADH  
AMCONSUL DHAHRAN  
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM  
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK  
HQ USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL  
DIA WASHDC  
CIA WASHDC  
NSC WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L JEDDAH 000368

NOFORN

DEPARTMENT FOR NEA/ARP, NEA/I

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TAGS: IZ KIRF KISL KU OFDP PAL PGOV PHUM SA

SUBJECT: IRAQI CONSUL GENERAL IN JEDDAH MOVING TO KUWAIT AS  
CHARGE D'AFFAIRES, CLAIMING IRAQI MFA IS WITHHOLDING  
AMBASSADORIAL RANK FOR SECTARIAN REASONS

Classified By: Consul General Martin R. Quinn for reasons 1.4 (b)  
and (d)

1.(C/NF) At September 28 Libyan National Day reception in Jeddah, Iraqi Consul General Dr. Ajwad Sheikh Taha Hamad (strictly protect), Iraqi-Canadian dual national, told CG that he expects any day now (as soon as his visa is ready), to take up his new post in Kuwait as Charge d'Affaires. Confiding mixed feelings about the new posting after completing nearly four years in Jeddah, Dr. Hamad claimed that his own Foreign Ministry is not sending him with ambassadorial rank for what he believes are mainly "sectarian reasons." Hamad said that he had seen a memo indicating that Shia in the Iraqi MFA had blocked his appointment as ambassador primarily because he is a Sunni. In addition to the sectarian factor, he said his age was used as a pretext: "why bother to make him an ambassador when he will be retiring soon anyway." Hamad indicated that Iraqi diplomats normally retire at sixty-three although can be granted extensions; he indicated that he would attain that age in a year or so.

1.2. (C/NF) Dr. Hamad complained about what he said was the extremely high volume of Iraqi "politicians" being rewarded with ambassadorships (citing a ratio of 60 political versus 5 career appointments) and about his own situation as a "loyal bureaucrat" discriminated against as a Sunni even though many of his family were married to Shia. ("What can we do, carry the sectarian conflict into the bedroom?") Hamad remarked that the Kuwait appointment was often sought after by Iraqi diplomats and his wife, currently residing in Ontario, Canada, is originally Kuwaiti. Just returned from a trip to Baghdad, Hamad said the Foreign Minister told him he was "needed in Kuwait." Thus, Hamad said he was resigned to accept the assignment.

1.3. (C/NF) COMMENT: A mild-mannered, bearded, be-spectacled, scholarly type, with a French doctorate in economics, Dr. Ajwad Hamad has professional background and expertise on oil issues. In addition to having worked in the Iraqi Petroleum Ministry for several years, Hamad said he once ran a "consultancy business" in the early 90s in Kazakhstan, but gave it up and emigrated to Canada after Saddam Hussein placed several members of his family, including his mother, under arrest. Friendly towards Americans, Hamad appears generally well regarded by his Jeddah counterparts. Nevertheless, he can be acerbically critical of Arab colleagues, observing at the Libyan reception that the Palestinian consul general, an outgoing Gaza native, is "always the first in line to kiss the Saudi dignitaries."

Hamad, like some other Iraqi diplomats we have met in the region, does not hesitate to express frank frustration with his own government and deep concern about Iranian/Shia influence in his country. END COMMENT.

QUINN